

VZCZCXRO0796
PP RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHTA #0665 0930447
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 020447Z APR 08
FM AMEMBASSY ASTANA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2159
RUCNCLS/SCA COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS ASTANA 000665

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INL (BALABANIAN), SCA/CEN (OMARA), SCA/RA;

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [KCOR](#) [PREL](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: RECORD DRUG SEIZURE ON BORDER

11. Summary: On the morning of March 27, the Customs Service of Kazakhstan seized 537 kilos of heroin, the largest single seizure ever recorded in the country. This single seizure is also larger than the total amount of heroin seized in Kazakhstan last year. The drugs were seized at the Kairak border checkpoint on the Kazakhstani-Russian border and were discovered using a stationary X-ray machine. Two Russian citizens were arrested in connection with the seizure. End Summary.

12. Five hundred thirty-seven kilos of heroin were seized at the Kairak customs checkpoint, located 180 kilometers from Kostanai city in the Kostanaiskaya oblast (northern Kazakhstan) on the border with Russia. Nurlan Alimbekov, Head of the Division on Combating Contraband of the Customs Control Committee of the Ministry of Finance reported that the drugs originated in Afghanistan. The heroin was hidden under a false bottom of a Volvo refrigerated truck with Russian license plates. The truck was traveling from Uzbekistan through Kazakhstan. The drugs were only discovered as the truck departed Kazakhstan for Russia. A stationary TC-Scan x-ray machine was used to detect the truck's false bottom and the presence of a foreign cargo. The drugs were packed in 28 bags. The dealers decided to leave the truck empty -- expecting that would ensure the truck would not draw suspicion -- except for the 28 packets of heroin hidden under the false bottom. Two drivers in the truck were detained. The Customs Control Committee reported that the truck had previously transited Kazakhstan from Russia to Uzbekistan with a load of bananas. Traffic through the Kairak automobile checkpoint was last reported as 70,000 people and 20,000 vehicles in July 2007.

13. The seized packets had stamps in Arabic characters and contained high-quality, pure heroin. The wholesale value of the seized drugs is over \$22 million and the quantity could be broken down into 3.5 million individual doses. Kairat Baranshinov, Deputy Head of the Department of Customs Control of Kostanaiskaya oblast, stated the drugs would sell for twice the wholesale value in Russia and if they were transported and sold in Europe they would sell for five times the wholesale value there. The total amount of heroin seized by all Kazakhstani law enforcement services last year was 522 kilos -- less than this single seizure by 15 kilos.

14. The Customs Control Department of Kostanaiskaya oblast has brought criminal cases against the two drivers. Further investigation will be conducted to determine the final destination of the drugs. The Procurator General's Office must still determine whether the investigative jurisdiction for this case will be the Ministry of Internal Affairs or the Committee for National Security. The two drivers, both citizens of Russia, could be sentenced to 10 to 15 years in prison under article 250 of the Criminal Code for crossing the border with undeclared narcotic substances as part of an organized criminal group.

ORDWAY